SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: The Preserve at Redwood Shores, Redwood Shores, in Redwood City, San Mateo County; First Review
(For Board consideration on February 11, 2008)

Project Summary

Project Sponsors: Keech Properties, LLC.

Project Representatives: Max Keech of Keech Properties LLC (Owner), Callander Associates, Inc.

Project Site (see Exhibits A through F). The site is located on the north side of Marine Parkway and Shearwater Parkway, at the northeastern edge of the Redwood Shores Peninsula in the City of Redwood City, San Mateo County. The proposed development would occur on the last major parcel of developable land on the Redwood Shores Peninsula. The project would be located on two parcels: a 109-acre parcel known as Area H, and an undeveloped five acre parcel, known as Salt Court, located adjacent to the southwest corner of Area H. Of the 114 acres, approximately 60,000 square feet are within the Commission's shoreline band jurisdiction and a portion of the exterior levee along Belmont Slough is in the Commission's Bay jurisdiction. The 60,000 square feet consists of 600 linear feet of shoreline along the Salt Court portion of the project. The remainder of the property proposed for development is outside Commission's jurisdiction. The existing site is mostly upland open space, containing native, non-native, and invasive plant species. The Area H parcel is located behind a levee and does not receive tidal flows from the Bay. Therefore, the historically tidal marsh area now contains less than 25 acres of seasonal wetlands. The Salt Court parcel is undeveloped land and includes a controlled tidal basin and a non-tidal dredge pond. Residential land uses surround the project area to the east, west, and south. The Redwood Shores lagoon system forms a network of waterways within and between the Redwood Shores residential neighborhoods.

Existing Public Access. The City of Redwood City holds public access easements that run along the perimeter levee around Area H. The State of California also holds a public access easement along the perimeter levee. The existing public access trail along the top of the perimeter levee and around the tip of Redwood Shores Peninsula was closed to the public in the 1990's beyond the look-out-point, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) determined that the public access may cause potential adverse impacts to the habitat of endangered species, particularly the California clapper rail. A second public access trail runs along the southerly portion of Area H along Shearwater Parkway and connects to the Bay Trail on the Salt Court parcel to the south, and to public trails along the channel to the east of Area H. These trails are part of the San Francisco Bay Trail system.

Existing Wetlands. The existing wetlands onsite fall into five classifications including: 1.09 acres of tidal wetlands (northern tip of Area H); 17.55 acres of non-tidal, palustrine emergent wetland (throughout Area H); 5.64 acres of non-tidal, open water pond; 0.94 acres of controlled tidal basin (Salt Court parcel); and 1.2 acres of non-tidal dredge pond (Salt Court parcel).

Use. Plan Map 6 of the *San Francisco Bay Plan* designates a portion of the site as Waterfront Park/Beach Priority Use Area (See Exhibits G and K).

Proposed Project (see Exhibits G through S). The proposed development of the 114-acre site includes a restored tidal wetlands area of approximately 90 acres (including levees, public access trail, and channel/lagoon), a 7-acre elementary school site, which would potentially serve approximately 400 to 450 students, a 3.5-acre neighborhood park, and 158 townhomes.

The 90-acre wetlands would serve to mitigate the environmental impacts of the development planned for the site and would provide new habitat for local marsh species. A series of trails would provide public access near the wetlands as well as educational opportunities and a link to the regional San Francisco Bay Trail. Additionally, new levees would be constructed as part of the development effort to improve flood control for the site and the entire community of Redwood Shores.

Seven acres of the site would be provided to the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District (BRSSD) as a site for a new public elementary school to serve Redwood Shores. New townhomes would be provided on 9.5-acres at the southeast corner of Area H and 2-acres within the southern half of the Salt Court parcel, providing 158 new townhomes.

The proposed neighborhood park, sited around an existing lagoon on the Salt Court parcel, would serve as a staging point for visitors exploring the restored wetlands. It would offer parking, seating and gathering spaces and tennis facilities, and is intended to benefit from a joint-use agreement with the School District to provide community after school and weekend access to the school's athletic fields.

Public Access. The proposed public access improvements for this project would occur in two phases.

1. Phase 1 would remove 1,700 feet of existing public access and replace it with 4,200 feet of new access. This new access consists of 2,500 feet atop the new levee system and 1,700 feet of new public access consisting of a 12-foot-wide sidewalk/bike path along Shearwater Parkway. The new levee trail would front the proposed restored tidal wetland. Phase 1 would also include a 3.5-acre public park including public paths, benches, landscaping, and public tennis courts. Phase 1 also includes a conservation easement over the Phase 2 area to ensure its restoration and the preservation of views along the proposed pathways.

2. Phase 2 would remove the 900-foot-long existing trail along Belmont Slough and add 1,200 feet of new access. The existing trail is atop a levee, which would be lowered, narrowed, and interrupted by a tidal opening. The new access would be continuous and connect the new levee trails to the existing neighborhood trails system adjacent to the project.

Public Access Issues. The staff believes that the project raises four primary issues for the Board to address in its review: (1) whether the proposed project provides adequate connections to and continuity along the shoreline and enhances visual access to the Bay and shoreline; (2) whether the proposed project provides adequate, usable and attractive public access spaces; (3) whether the

proposed public access is sited and designed to be compatible with wildlife; and (4) whether the proposed has been designed to address the effect of sea level rise on public access areas.

1. **Are the connections to the proposed public access areas adequate to lead the public to and along the project site and are the view corridors adequate to provide visual access to the Bay and shoreline?** The *San Francisco Bay Plan*, Public Access policies state that," "…[p]ublic access improvements provided as a condition of any approval should be consistent with the project and the physical environment, including protection of the Bay natural resources, such as aquatic life, wildlife and plant communities, and provide for the public's safety and convenience. The improvements should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay–related activities and movement to and along the shoreline, should permit barrier free access for the physically handicapped, and should be identified with appropriate signs…." (Policy No. 6). Additionally, the policies state, "[p]ublic access should be integrated early in the planning and design of Bay habitat restoration projects to maximize public access opportunities and to avoid significant adverse effects on wildlife" (Policy No. 4); and "[a]ccess to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare…. "(Policy No. 8) The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that, "access areas are utilized most if they provide direct connections to public rights-of-way such as streets and sidewalks…" and "should be planned in collaboration with local governments" to provide for future connections. The *Guidelines* further state that this may be accomplished by "providing connections perpendicular to the shoreline at regular intervals…to maximize the opportunities for accessing and viewing the Bay." The *Guidelines* also recommend "locating buildings, structures…and landscaping…such that they enhance and dramatize views of the Bay and the shoreline from public thoroughfares and other public spaces" and "organizing shoreline development to allow Bay views and access between buildings."

   The project sponsors are proposing a new public access trail between all new development and the Bay, along the top of an approximately 2,500-foot new levee. In addition, they propose 1,700 feet of new public access consisting of a 12-foot-wide sidewalk/bike path along Shearwater Parkway. A segment of the 900-foot public access path in the southwest portion of the site along Belmont Slough would be removed as part of Phase 2 in order to breach, narrow, and lower the levee and return tidal action to the site.

   With the removal of the 900-foot trail and the breaching of levees, public access along the existing levee would be infeasible. The project sponsors state that, "even if the levee were to remain in place, public access to the levee has already been restricted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and COE due to endangered species habitat conflicts. This project does, however, create new shoreline public access by breaching the outer levees and bringing the Bay, and the shoreline with it, inland to where the new public access would be provided." To offset the loss of this 900-foot trail, the project sponsors propose to add 1,200 feet of new public access in the northeastern corner of the project site. In addition, the project sponsors are also proposing a 3.5-acre public park, which would include: existing trails; new landscaping; picnic tables; tennis courts; and an improved public parking lot.

   When the project is complete, continuous public access along the shoreline would exist throughout the site, though the shoreline would be in a different location than where it currently exists. The public access would be adjacent to tidal marsh and the new levee trail would connect with the existing Gossamer neighborhood trail system adjacent to the project site.

The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsors on whether the proposed project provides adequate connections from nearby public streets, and from the existing Bay Trail segments from the east, and the west. The Board should also advise whether view corridors from the nearest public streets to the south have been adequately included, to provide visual access to the Bay and shoreline and lead the public to the public access spaces. In addition, advice from the Board is sought on whether the buildings, structures and landscaping enhance and dramatize views of the Bay and shoreline from the public streets and the public access areas.

2. **Does the proposed project provide adequate, usable, and attractive public access spaces**? The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access spaces should be "designed and built to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities along the shoreline", to create a "sense of place", and "designed for a wide range of users". The *Guidelines* further state, "[v]iew opportunities, shoreline configuration and access points are factors that determine a site's inherent public access opportunities." Additionally, the *Guidelines* further state that one should "design public access so that the user is not intimidated nor is the user's appreciation diminished by large nearby building masses, structures, or incompatible uses."

   The existing public access consists of a 10-foot wide asphalt path through most of the site. The new public access would also consist of a 10-foot wide paved pathway with a 5-foot shoulder. A new primary overlook would be provided with a 250 to 500-square-foot overlook and a 500 to 1,000-square-foot picnic area. Additional picnic areas and parking for twenty-five to thirty cars would be provided in the neighborhood park with direct access to the trail. The parking would include spaces designated for disabled persons, and access points to the trail would not exceed a five percent slope to ensure accessibility. The public access trail would connect to the Bay Trail at either end (Shearwater Parkway at the eastern end of the site and the neighborhood park at the western end of the site). The project would also include links between the townhome developments and the public access trail. In addition, the proposed 12-foot-wide sidewalk/bike path along Shearwater Parkway would connect pedestrians and bicyclists to the access points to the new public access trails.

   The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsors whether the proposed public access areas are sufficient to accommodate the expected level of use, designed to take advantage of existing site characteristics and opportunities, are safe and secure, and include appropriate site amenities. Additionally, the Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsors on whether the proposed locations for the benches and picnic tables are appropriate to maximize opportunities for sitting, viewing, picnicking, and wildlife observation. The Board should further advise the Commission and the project sponsors whether the proposed removal of existing public access amenities have been adequately replaced with new public access trails and amenities.

3. **Is the public access sited and designed to be compatible with wildlife utilizing the project site?** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* policies on public access state that, "public access should be sited, designed and managed to prevent significant adverse effects on wildlife." Additionally, "[p]ublic access should be integrated early in the planning and design of Bay habitat restoration projects to maximize public access opportunities and to avoid significant adverse effects on wildlife." (Policy No. 12) In many locations around the Bay, the shoreline edge is a vital area for wildlife. Access to some wildlife areas allows visitors to discover, experience, and appreciate the Bay's natural resources and can foster public support for Bay resource protection. However, in some cases, public access may have adverse effects on wildlife (including flushing, increased stress, interrupted foraging, and/or nest abandonment), and may result in adverse long-term population and species effects. Methods for avoiding adverse effects of public access on wildlife include: (1) using design elements to encourage or discourage specific types of human activities; (2) providing spur trails to reduce informal access into and through more sensitive areas; (3) using physical design features to buffer wildlife from human use; (4) managing type and location of public use; and (5) incorporating educational and interpretive elements within public access areas.

   The project sponsors have proposed several design features incorporated into their project to educate the public and minimize disturbance to the plants, fish, and wildlife. These design

features include: (1) replacing existing inland access with a 12-foot-wide sidewalk/bike path along Shearwater Parkway, provides a way for the public to discover, experience, and appreciate the restored wetland habitat; (2) designing the new public access to reduce habitat fragmentation and interaction between humans and wildlife by relocating the public access along a formalized developed edge; (3) eliminating the 900-foot trail on the existing outboard levee, including lowering and breaching the levee, to prevent access to sensitive habitat; (4) creating a 7:1 exterior slope on the new public access trail that would provide approximately 50-feet of upland habitat; (5) creating an additional 20-feet of buffer landscaping on the interior slope of the levee to separate the planned development from the public access trail; (6) installing a 4-foot-high chain-link-fence on the upland buffer of the exterior slope to create a physical barrier to sensitive wetlands and wildlife; and (7) installing interpretive signs at overlooks to educate the public about the history, ecology, and sensitive nature of the Bay's natural resources.

The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsors on whether the proposed public access employs appropriate siting, design, and management strategies (such as buffers or use restrictions) to reduce or prevent adverse human and wildlife interactions. The Board should also advise the Commission and the project sponsors on whether the proposed project provides the public with diverse and satisfying public access opportunities that focus activities in designated areas and avoid habitat fragmentation, vegetation trampling, and erosion.

4. **Have the public access areas been designed to adequately address sea level rise?** The staff is currently evaluating whether the proposed public access areas would be vulnerable to inundation in the future.

The project sponsors state that, "[o] f particular concern in the design of The Preserve is flood protection for the community. Redwood City and the COE determined in the 1990s that the current perimeter levee system, with a crest height of 7-8 feet above mean sea level (MSL), did not provide adequate protection from coastal flooding hazards. Phase 1 of this project would construct a new, interior levee around the new school and townhomes and along the eastern boundary of the site to replace the existing levee. The new levees would be constructed with a crest height of 11.5 feet above MSL initially, allowing for approximately 2 feet of settlement to achieve a post-settlement crest elevation at or above 9.2 feet above MSL. Additionally, the outboard slope of the levee would be 7:1 to resist wave run-up. These design parameters are based on the findings of a recently completed coastal hazards study prepared by Moffatt & Nichol and a geotechnical study prepared by Treadwell and Rollo. This new levee would then serve as the primary flood protection for The Preserve when the exterior levee is breached during Phase 2. "

The project sponsors state that the levee design will protect against anticipated sea level rise for approximately 50 years. Page 183 of the EIR states, "The expected costal flood hazard in 2050 would be the increased base sea elevation (1.2 feet above existing conditions by 2050) added to the extreme tide elevation (7.2 NGVD) which would be approximately 8.4 NGVD. The proposed levee would be of adequate height (9.0 to 9.5 feet NGVD after settlement) to protect the project site against existing costal hazards and near-future sea level rise." The project sponsors state that, "Should future sea level rise exceed this amount the levee (and all levees around Redwood Shores) would need to be raised. The 7:1 exterior slopes of this levee would make that physically possible without requiring (future) bay fill."

The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsors on whether the proposed project and proposed public access areas have been adequately designed to address sea level

rise. Specifically, the Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsors on whether the proposed design of the new levee system is adequate to prevent flooding during storm events and on the potential of rising sea levels in the future.